

## Letters

### **Consultation is limited**

I HAVE today read the Frankston Council's pamphlet of betrayal: Planning for our Future - Building a new beginning from a solid foundation.

Although I welcome the Frankston Council's initiative in consulting ratepayers, I am disappointed with the limited nature of this consultation ie regarding boundary and name changes. I don't believe that the abdication of democratic debate and decision provides a solid foundation.

While I recognise that there is a momentum clearly established by the Local Government Board for inevitable boundary and name changes, there is a more significant imperative that is being ignored by the Frankston council.

Presumably the council is being pragmatic but democracy is a fundamental value and the reality is that we are all being denied a democratic choice in the structure and direction of local government. Instead, we have an economic rationalist agenda driven by an ideologically-driven government aided and abetted by the 'Independent' Local Government Board and submissive councils.

Of course, there is a process of submissions, Interim and Final Reports but these only influence boundary and name changes. Councils have the option of opposing amalgamation and those who have - have been ignored.

All the reports of the Local Government Board are the same - the same analysis and argument for every review. What is different are the names and local characteristics of the local government bodies.

Frankston Council imitates this sameness by arguing that restructuring will have the following benefits - uniform valuation methods, uniform charges and rating structures, economies of scale, improved town planning and economic development.

The council assures us that there will be a continued provision of

quality services - based on a rate reduction of 25 per cent. This is the same reassurance given in all the reports of the Local Government Board. The Board is not interested in the quality of existing services, the scope for expanding services and the introduction of new services.

Its focus has been on reducing rates and, therefore, the income generated by local government and, therefore, its expenditure capacity. The ultimate goal is to reduce the role of local government in the community - in favour of the private sector. The Victorian Government believes that the public sector should "steer" rather than "row" and the local government is being forced to comply with this privatisation.

Few are willing to engage the Victorian Government and the Local Government Board in debate. Yet, without democratically consulting ratepayers on the more important issues the Frankston Council does not have a mandate to ignore these issues.

That Frankston council has capitulated to all of this is another demonstration of how those in power submit to aggressive elites. The council can betray itself but it has no mandate to betray the ratepayers who elected the councillors and fund the council.

**-David Griffiths.**  
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